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58. Albert D. Wheelon, Memorandum for Chairman, United States Intelligence Board, "Evaluation of Offensive Missile Threat in Cuba," 17 October 1962

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17 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, United States Intelligence Board

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Offensive Missile Threat in Cuba

The following report was prepared by the Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee (GMAIC) of the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) in collaboration with the NFIC. It is based on relatively complete photointerpretation of Mission No. 3101 flown on 14 October 1962, and the most preliminary readout of Mission No. 3102, flown on 15 October 1962. Mission 3103, also flown on 15 October 1962 did not cover this area of missile deployment. The following conclusions were developed from data available as of 1700 hours on 17 October 1962.

1. The missiles observed in Western Cuba are medium range ballistic missiles which were reported moving into this area during September. These missiles are of Soviet origin and manned by Soviet personnel.

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2. At least some of the missiles observed in photography are 1020 mm SS-4 missiles. Detailed photointerpretation shows that the missiles are canvas covered, have blunt nose, and are 66 feet, plus or minus two feet in length. This agrees well with the length of the SS-4 missile tankage (64 feet) without its nose cone, and is different from the tankage length (56 feet) of the 630 mm SS-3. However, there are less certain length measurements which range from 55 to 68 feet on missiles in another area, so that one cannot rule out the possibility of a mixed force including some 630 mm missiles. The general missile lengths provided in the clandestine reports are compatible with either the SS-3 or SS-4. The missile measurements, site configuration and ground support equipment mitigate against the SS-2 (350 mm), the SS-5 (2200 mm) and cruise type missiles.

1. Based on analysis of [REDACTED] there is agreement that the last 630 mm missile was produced in early 1959 and that the present surplus of these missiles over those expended is between 70 and 80 missiles.

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On the other hand, 1020 nm missiles are still being produced and there is probably a Soviet inventory of 650 to 850 such missiles. There have been no training firings of the 630 nm missile since October 1961, whereas thirty 1020 nm missiles have been launched already this year (1962). Considering these aspects we believe the 630 nm missile program is relatively inactive and that the more modern 1020 nm missile is more likely for this venture.

4. The greater range capability of the 1020 nm missile provides significant US target coverage advantage over the 630 nm missile. (See Figure)

5. There are now two confirmed MRBM launch sites in Western Cuba at San Diego de Los Baños and Los Palacios. A third site at San Cristobal is connected with this deployment and a third launch site. We cannot preclude the possibility that other sites will appear which would follow the usual Soviet practice of organizing two battalions into a missile regiment, which is the operating unit of strategic forces. However, such regiments usually include a technical support unit, and the third site could be the location

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of this unit.

6. There are eight missiles and four launchers visible at the most advanced site (San Diego de Los Banos). It is probable that eight missiles will be deployed to each such site, apparently for a refire capability. The total force structure depends upon the interpretation of the third site and possibilities of a fourth site. The best current estimate is that at least 16 and possibly as many as 32 missiles will be operational in Cuba in the next week or so.

7. The sites being deployed in Cuba are field type launchers which rely on mobile erection, checkout, and support equipment. The four-in-line deployment of launchers, at sites which are themselves five miles apart is representative of MRBM deployment in the Soviet Union. None of the sites are revetted, but this feature could be added at any time.

8. We are having difficulty in distinguishing between the 630 and 1020 mm systems on the basis of site characteristics, since neither can be ruled out on the basis of those physical measurements which have been made from the U-2 photography obtained to

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date. The problem results from resolution limitations of satellite photography and has precluded identification of similar field type launchers in the Soviet Union or European satellites. From valid clandestine sources, we gather that the 1020 nm missile can be readily deployed to presurveyed alternate sites in a matter of 6 hours plus transit time. The possibility that launch sites can be relocated must not be overlooked.

9. There is significant change detectable in the sites between the two overflights one day apart. Fencing of two areas is evident on the second day, and substantial progress is being made on erecting temporary buildings. Fifty vehicles (an increase of 15) and the possible appearance of erectors are noted at the third area.

10. The question of earliest operational capability with these sites depends critically on the type of missile being deployed. If we are correct in identifying these as 1020 nm missiles, with storable propellants and self-contained (inertial) guidance, the first site could be available almost immediately for emergency use. However, we do not see missile nose cones nor do we know of

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nuclear supply or storage. (See JAEIC Statement re nuclear weapons.)

11. If the 630 nm missile is being deployed, we would expect to find radio guidance equipment to the rear of the launchers and cryogenic generators to supply the liquid oxygen for this missile. Photographic search thus far has not revealed either type of equipment, although we cannot yet say that our search is exhaustive.

12. The evidence favors the 1020 nm missile system, and indicates that this system will become operational in a matter of days.

Albert D. Wheelon

ALBERT D. WHEELON
Chairman

Guided Missile & Astronautics
Intelligence Committee

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